

CHAPTER 15

Al-Hijr: The Rock

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 6 *sections*; 99 *verses*)

This chapter is named *The Rock*, because of the mention of the Dwellers of the Rock in v. 80, whose fate is mentioned as a warning to those who contemplated the slaying of the Prophet. While promising a complete protection for the message of Truth contained in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân against all evil designs, it intensifies the warning contained in the previous chapters against those who were bent on its destruction.

The last chapter closed by warning the opponents of the end which they were destined to meet. The same subject is continued in the beginning of this chapter, because the Qur'ân, which was meant for the welfare of humanity, must be guarded against all evil intentions. Thus it is in the very first section that the grand promise is given that the Qur'ân shall forever be guarded against all corruption, and, of course, against all attempts to annihilate it. In the next section we are told that all things are controlled by Allâh, so that the mischief-makers cannot inflict any injury on the elect, and the signs of the triumph of Truth could already be witnessed. In the third section it is stated that the *shaitân* has always been opposing the righteous servants, yet his opposition has always been a failure. The next, while promising mercy for the righteous refers to an incident in Ibrâhîm's history as to how he was given the good news of the birth of a son, through whom a great nation was to be blessed. The same messengers also bore to him the news that Lût's people were about to be destroyed because of their great iniquities. The fifth section speaks of the punishment of the guilty people, who would not listen to Lût, closing with a reference to *Shu'aib*, also a descendant of Ibrâhîm. The Arabs, however, are warned of the fate of a people nearer home, the *Thamûd*, who dwelt in rocks, and they are told that, all-important as the message of the Qur'ân was, their mockery and opposition would not go unpunished.

That the chapter was revealed at Makkah is agreed on all hands, but it is generally regarded as being earlier than the other chapters of this group.

SECTION 1: The Qur'ân is guarded

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 *Alif lâm râ* These are the verses of the Book and (of) a Qur'ân that makes manifest.

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2 Often will those who disbelieve wish that they were Muslims.^a

3 Leave them to eat and enjoy themselves, and let (false) hope beguile them, for they will soon know.

4 And never did We destroy a town but it had a decree made known.

5 No people can hasten on their doom, nor can they postpone (it).

6 And they say: O you to whom the Reminder is revealed, you are indeed mad.

7 Why bring you not the *malâ'ikah* to us, if you are of the truthful?

8 We send not *malâ'ikah* but with truth, and then they would not be respited.^a

2a. The passage does not refer only to life after death. The powerful opponents, who were under the impression that Islâm would soon be annihilated, must no doubt have felt after in life, when the truth of Islâm became manifest to them, that it would have been much better for them, if they had accepted Islâm at the first call of the Prophet.

8a. The demand is here as elsewhere: *Why are not the malâ'ikah sent?* The words *if you are of the truthful* clearly show that the coming of *malâ'ikah* is demanded in relation to the fulfilment of prophecies. The answer makes it still clearer. The words *bi-l-haqq* (*with truth*) really signifies *in accordance with the requirements of truth, justice, and wisdom* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The meaning therefore is that the *malâ'ikah* will be sent, when they are required to

execute the judgment of the doom of the opponents; and the concluding words, *and then they would not be respited*, dispel all doubts on the point.

9 Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian.^a

10 And certainly We sent (messengers) before you among the sects of yore.

11 And there never came a messenger to them but they mocked him.

12 Thus do We make it enter the hearts of the guilty^a—

13 They believe not in it; and the example of the ancients has gone before.

14 And even if We open to them a gate of *samâ'*, and they keep on ascending into it,

15 They would say: Only our eyes have been covered over, rather we are an enchanted people.^a

SECTION 2: Forces of Evil will be destroyed

16 And certainly We have made *Burûj* (black-holes, strongholds and pigeon-holes), in the *samâ'*, and We have made it fair-seeming to the beholders,

9a. This is one of the most wonderful prophecies, whose fulfilment is, and will ever remain, a standing testimony to the truth of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. The statement is first made in connection with the powerful opposition of the disbelievers, and is then made general, that the Qur'ân will for all time be preserved safe against all attempts to destroy it and from every kind of corruption. The fulfilment of this prophecy is so evident a fact that a hostile writer like Muir admits that “there is probably in the world no other book which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text”. The recent attempt of Dr. Mingana to prove alterations in the text of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân has resulted in miserable failure, and his discovery has rather set the question at rest. During the whole length and breadth of the Islâmic world there does not exist a single copy with any variation from the recognized text, and thus not only was the Qur'ân preserved from destruction against a powerful enemy, but it has also been preserved from corruption.

12a. *Thus* refers to the mockery mentioned in the previous verse; the meaning being *as they mock the revelation, so We make it enter their hearts that they do not believe in it*. It is equivalent to saying that this is due to their mockery, or a consequence of their mockery.

15a. This verse and the one preceding it speak of the hardness of their hearts. They were determined to reject the truth and did not pay any attention to the clearest evidence.

17 And We guard it against every accursed *shaitân*,

18 But he who steals a hearing; so there follows him a visible flame.^a

19 And the earth — We have spread it out and made in it firm mountains and caused to grow in it of every suitable thing.

20 And We have made in it means of subsistence for you and for him for whom you provide not.

21 And there is not a thing but with

Us are the treasures of it, and We send it not down but in a known measure.

22 And We send the winds fertilizing,^a then send down water from the clouds, so We give it to you to drink; nor is it you who store it up.

23 And surely it is We, Who give life and cause death, and We are the Inheritors.^a

18a. The three verses speak of the soothsayers and the diviners, who were among the opponents of the Holy Prophet; they pretended to receive communications from on high. We are here told that they were really driven from the Divine presence, and therefore could not have any access to that source of purity. In speaking of the divinations as being followed by a visible flame, it is indicated that they meet with failure and disappointment. The description of religious truths in words relating to physical laws prevailing in the world is of common occurrence in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. Thus in verse 22 the *fertilizing winds* stand for the *imperceptible advance of Islâm* (see 22a). For further reference, see 37:8, 8a, 9a, 10a; 52:38, 38a; 67:5, 5a; 72:8, 8a.

22a. The *lawâqih*, or *fertilizing* winds, are those which raise a cloud that gives rain, or those which make herbage and plants fruitful. Here they represent the

signs of the progress of Islâm before its final triumph, which is indicated by the rain.

23a. *Wârith* means *one who inherits*, and therefore *one who remains after another has perished*. The announcement made here is a prophecy that the true worshippers of Allâh will be heirs in the land while the others will perish.

24 And certainly We know those among you who go forward and We certainly know those who lag behind.

25 And surely your *Rabb* will gather them together. He indeed is Wise, Knowing.^a

SECTION 3: The Shaitân's Opposition to the Righteous

26 And surely We created human beings of sounding clay, of black mud fashioned into shape.

27 And the *jinn*, We created before of intensely hot fire.^a

28 And when your *Rabb* said to the *malâ'ikah*: I am going to create a mortal of sounding clay, of black mud fashioned into shape.

29 So when I have (justly) adapted and expanded it (the component parts of the mortal) by My divine inspiration, and grow submissively (according to Allâh's divine scheme).^a

25a. *Al-mustaqdimîn* (v. 24) are *those who are foremost in accepting truth*, and *al-musta'khirîn*, *those who lag behind in accepting it*. They will all be gathered together, i.e., ultimately those who now lag behind will be brought over to the right course. Some understand by these two words *those who have gone before* and *those who will come afterwards* respectively, in point of time.

27a. For an explanation of man's creation from dust, see 7:12a. In human being's creation from dust there also seems to be a reference to his low and humble origin and to his temperate nature, as opposed to another kind of creation of a fiery nature, which is called the *jinn* or the *shaitân*. The two words, *jinn* and *shaitân*, are frequently applied to human beings of a fiery temperament or rebellious nature, men who lead others to evil. This description of the creation of *men* and *jinn* from

dust and *fire* respectively is no doubt an allegorical description of the nature of those who are submissive to Divine laws and those who rebel against them, and the allegory is carried on further in what is stated of the rebellion of the *shaitân* against Âdam, the two being taken as prototypes of the two kinds of temperament. The two descriptions of the origin of man, his being made from clay that gives sound and of mud that is fashioned into shape, refer to the two great characteristics which give man a superiority over other animals, there being a reference to the use of language in the *clay that gives sound*, and to the perfection of his make in the *mud fashioned into shape*. Were it not for the use of language and the perfection of his make, man could not have risen above the lower animals. It should also be noted that elsewhere the *salsâl* is likened to *fakhkhâr* (55:14), which means *clay that has been baked*, showing that the earth's surface itself has baked in fire. It was undoubtedly originally a lump of fire.

30 So the *malâ'ikah* made obeisance, all of them together —

31 But Iblîs (did it not). He refused to be with those who made obeisance.

32 He said: O Iblîs, what is the reason that you are not with those who make obeisance?

33 He said: I am not going to make obeisance to a mortal, whom You have created of sounding clay, of black mud fashioned into shape.

34 He said: Then go forth, for surely you are driven away,

35 And surely on you is a curse till the day of Judgment.

36 He said: My *Rabb*, respite me till the time when they are raised.^a

37 He said: Surely you are of the respited ones,

38 Till the period of the time made known.

39 He said: My *Rabb*, as You have judged me erring,^a I shall certainly make (evil) fair-seeming to them on earth, and I shall cause them all to deviate,

29a. In the above verse, the Arabic words *fî hi* refers to the constitutive components of a human being and not to a lump of flesh 'in' which Allâh has instilled His *rûh*. Rather, the constitutive components of human beings are

subjected to distinct evolutionary processes of development. In other words, the component parts of human beings have been subjected to processes of

- (1) (*Sawwâ*) = just or orderly formation,
- (2) (*Nafakha*) = advancement or expansion,
- (3) (*Faqa'a*) = and consistent growth,
- (4) (*Sajada*) = submissive development.

Moreover, *rûh* in the verse refers to Allâh's Divine scheme or sequential order of creation. If one uses the argument that Allâh instilled His 'spirit' in human beings, then:

(a) It follows that human beings are infused with qualities, which are unique only to Allâh. This would imply that human beings have similarities to that of Allâh. Tâj al-'Arûs uses a tradition which speaks about the revival of human beings according to Allâh's *Dîn* [*i.e.* the way of life as prescribed by Allâh] and *rûh*, that is, Divine order of creation. Hence, *rûh* refers to Allâh's Divine scheme.

(b) It would appear as if Allâh first adapted or created the material or physical aspect of human beings before having given it its non-material, imaginal (please note that it is the adjective of *imago*) and intelligential or "spiritual"¹ aspect, that is its "soul" or "the self". However, the use of the Arabic word *wa*, which means 'and' signify that Allâh's processes of orderly creation occurred simultaneously, otherwise Allâh would have used *thumma* = denoting what follows in succession. (NB. It is interesting to note that "have fashioned", "breathed" and "created" are not all in the same tense. As if to imply that these actions in fact did not occur at the same time!)

36a. When a human being is raised to life, the suggestions and the promptings of the *shaitân* cease to affect him metaphorically speaking. But until he finds the true

1 : The terms: "Spiritual", "spirit" and "soul" are problematic terms, as it includes meanings which cannot be defined with factual information. Furthermore, one finds difficulty in moving away from its pagan connotations. The terms "*spirit*" or "*spiritual*" must be applied and understood correctly. The meaning of the term '*spiritual*' as used above is to try and clarify that the "self" is not a separate development of the body. The best meaning according to the popular understanding is 'The life-giving and immaterial part of human beings' or 'a rational being considered apart from his or her material body'. Furthermore, should one use the term '*spiritual*' it ought to refer to the one Who is supreme in excellence surpassing everyone, the one Who alone has absolute knowledge, the one with whom no one can be compared.

religious life, evil suggestions mislead him now and then. This is the “time made known” in v. 38.

39a. The meaning has been fully explained in 7:16a. It may be added here that this is a remarkable instance of what *idlâl*, *ighwâ*, and such other words mean when attributed to Allâh. The *shaitân* refuses to make obeisance to Âdam of his own accord, and this is expressed by saying *aghwaita-nî*, the meaning clearly being, *because You have judged me to be in error, not caused me to err.*

40 Except Your servants from among them, the purified ones.

41 He said: This is a right way with Me.

42 As regards My servants, you have no authority over them except such of the deviators as follow you.^a

43 And surely hell is the promised place for them all —

44 It has seven gates. For each gate is an appointed portion of them.^a

SECTION 4: Mercy for the Righteous — Ibrâhîm

45 Surely those who keep their duty are in Gardens and fountains.

46 Enter them in peace, secure.

47 And We shall root out whatever of rancour is in their breasts — as brethren, on raised couches, face to face.

48 Toil afflicts them not therein, nor will they be ejected there-from.^a

42a. In a broad sense all men are servants of Allâh. That the devil has no authority over any man is clear from 14:22, where the *shaitân* says to his followers: “I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me.”

44a. Hell is mentioned by seven different names in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân: (1) *Jahannam*, or *hell*; (2) *lazâ*, or *flaming fire*; (3) *hutamah*, or *crushing disaster*; (4) *sa’îr*, or *burning fire*; (5) *saqar*, or *scorching fire*; (6) *jahîm*, or *fierce fire*; (7) *hâwiyah*, or *abyss*. The seven gates mean the seven ways which lead into it, according to which there are seven different names. But see 2:29b, where it is

shown that the numeral *seven* in Arabic often stands for a large number, so that the meaning may be that there are many gates or many ways leading to it.

48a. Such is the Muslim paradise. There is absolute peace of mind, perfect security from any inclination to evil or any other danger (verse 46); there is a brotherhood in which no one conceals any rancour in his heart for his brother, nor has anyone a complaint against another (verse 47); and lastly, there is neither toil nor fatigue, nor is one to be ever deprived of that state of perfect bliss (verse 48). This verse further establishes that those who are once made to enter paradise are not sent back to this world; and that therefore the garden in which Âdam was at first placed was not the paradise of life, for in that case he would not have been ejected from it.

49 Inform My servants that I am the Forgiving, the Merciful,

50 And that My chastisement — that is the painful chastisement.

51 And inform them of the guests of Ibrâhîm.

52 When they entered upon him, they said, Peace! He said: We are afraid of you.

53 They said: Be not afraid, we give you good news of a boy, possessing knowledge.

54 He said: Do you give me good news when old age has come upon me? Of what then do you give me good news?

55 They said: We give you good news with truth,^a so be not thou of the despairing ones.

56 He said: And who despairs of the mercy of his *Rabb* but the erring ones?

57 He said: What is your business, then, O messengers?

58 They said: We have been sent to a guilty people,

59 Except Lût's followers. We shall deliver them all,

60 Except his wife: We ordained that she shall surely be of those who remain behind.

55a. Compare 3:45. The good news given here is not *of* truth, but *by means of* truth, which is Divine revelation.

SECTION 5: Lût and Shu'aib

- 61** So when the messengers came to Lût's followers,
62 He said: Surely you are an unknown people.
63 They said: Nay, we have come to you with that about which they disputed.
64 And we have come to thee with the truth, and we are surely truthful.
65 So travel with your followers for a part of the night and yourself follow their rear; and let not anyone of you turn round, and go whither you are commanded.
66 And We made known to him this decree, that the roots of these should be cut off in the morning.
67 And the people of the town came rejoicing.
68 He said: These are my guests, so disgrace me not,
69 And keep your duty to Allâh and shame me not.
70 They said: Did we not forbid you from (entertaining) people?^a
71 He said: These are my daughters, if you will do (aught).^a
72 By thy life! they blindly wandered on in their frenzy.

70a. As remarked in 11:78a, Lût was a stranger among the Sodomites, and, as this verse shows, he was forbidden by the people to entertain any stranger as a guest or to give him shelter.

71a. He offered his daughters as hostages, as a guarantee that the strangers would not make any mischief; see further 11:78a.

- 73** So the cry overtook them at sunrise;
74 Thus We turned it upside down, and rained upon them hard stones.
75 Surely in this are signs for those who take a lesson.^a
76 And it is on a road that still abides.
77 Verily therein is a sign for the believers.
78 And the dwellers of the grove were indeed iniquitous:^a
79 So We inflicted retribution on them. And they are both on an open high road.^a

SECTION 6: Dwellers of the Rock and a Warning

80 And the dwellers of the Rock indeed rejected the messengers;^a
81 And We gave them Our messages, but they turned away from them;
82 And they hewed houses in the mountains, in security.
83 So the cry overtook them in the morning;
84 And what they earned availed them not.

75a. Mutawassim is one who examines things in order to know the real character of a thing from outward signs; hence one who takes a lesson from the fate of others.

78a. The dwellers of the grove were Shu'aib's people. But whether they are the same as the people of Midian is not agreed upon.

79a. Imâm signifies a road because it is pursued or followed, the root being amma, meaning he directed his course to (Arabic-English Lexicon by Edward William Lane). By both are meant the cities of the people of Lût as well as those of Shu'aib's people. The road alluded to is the road followed by caravans from the Hijâz to Syria.

80a. The dwellers of the Rock are the people of Thamûd; see 7:73a.

85 And We created not the *samâwât* and the earth and what is between them but with truth. And the Hour is surely coming, so turn away with kindly forgiveness.^a

86 Surely your *Rabb* — He is the Creator, the Knower.

87 And certainly We have given you seven oft-repeated (verses)^a *wa* (together with) the grand Qur'ân.

88 Strain not your eyes at what We have given certain classes of them to enjoy, and grieve not for them, and make yourself gentle to the believers.^a

89 And say: I am indeed the plain warner.

90 Like as We sent down on them who took oaths,

91 Those who divided the Qur'ân into parts.

92 So, by your *Rabb*! We shall question them all,

93 As to what they did.

85a. The verse gives us a true insight into the Holy Prophet's mind. One instance only in the conquest of Makkah is sufficient to prove this, when, having captured the city which had most tyrannically driven him out with his followers, and whose people were guilty of shedding the innocent blood of the Muslims, he forgave all.

87a. The fact that the seven oft-repeated verses are the seven verses of the Opening chapter is known to every Muslim. These verses must be repeated by every Muslim in every single *rak'ah* in every prayer, to which he is at liberty to add any other portion of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. Thus every Muslim repeats these seven verses at least thirty times a day, no other portion of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân being repeated so often. The Prophet himself is reported to have said that the "seven oft-repeated verses" were the seven verses of the *Fâtiḥah* (Bukḥârî 65:1). According to the same ḥadīth, the *Fâtiḥah* is called the grand Qur'ân. It is so called because it contains the essence of the whole of the Qur'ân.

88a. This verse gives us a picture of the holy mind, for which the riches and embellishments of this life had no temptation, and the unequalled simplicity of his life from the time that he married a rich widow to the time that he ruled Arabia may be guessed from the last scene of his life, when he ordered the last penny in his house to be given to the poor. The verse, moreover, draws a picture of the utmost kindness and gentleness, which he showed to his followers. The straining of the eyes signifies looking desirously.

94 Therefore declare openly what you are commanded, and turn away from the polytheists.

95 Surely We are sufficient for you against the scoffers —

96 Those who set up another deity with Allāh; so they will come to know.

97 And We know indeed that your breast straitens at what they say;

98 So celebrate the praise of your *Rabb*, and be of those who make obeisance.

99 And serve your *Rabb*, until there comes to you that which is certain.^a

99a. *Al-yaqîn* (lit., *certainty*), or *that which is certain*, is here generally understood to mean *death* (Bukḥârî 65:xv, 5), because it is the one thing which is certain to come to every creature.